



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: BEE

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR THE BEE?

- It's *devorah*, from the root letters דבר, which means to speak.
- But possibly the original meaning of *devar* was “to buzz” or “to hum”—like a bee.
- One of our great modern rabbis (S.R. Hirsch) taught that the meaning of the letters דבר is “collecting” or “gathering,” like how we collect words together to make understandable talk.
- But, of course, bees also do collecting or gathering.

WERE THERE BEES IN ANCIENT ISRAEL?

- The Bible says that the land of Israel was “flowing with milk and honey.” (Deuteronomy 8:8)
- On the other hand, the rabbis say that that honey was made from dates.
- Yet, when Samson was on his way to his wedding he killed a lion and, when he returned, he found bees and honey in the remains, which he ate.

IT'S TIME FOR THE BEE QUIZ!

- What's your best guess as to how many different types of bees there are in the world? (About 20,000 and still counting.)
- Do bees live in colonies or alone? (Some are communal, living in large colonies, some live in groups of two to seven bees, and some are solitary, living alone.)
- How big are the largest bees? (About 1.6 inches long.)
- Are bees kosher to eat? (No!)
- If bees are not kosher, how can their honey be kosher? (Because the bees don't make the honey, they gather it from flowers and then put it in their comb. [Bechoroth 7b])

WHAT DO WE LIKE BEST ABOUT BEES?

- They store honey.
- They pollinate plants and flowers.

WHAT DO WE LIKE LEAST ABOUT BEES?

- They scare us.
- They sting.

THERE IS A STORY ABOUT WHY GOD DESTROYED THE EVIL CITY OF SODOM. (Sanhedrin 109b and Genesis Rabbah 49:6)

- One of the reasons God destroyed the city of Sodom was because of how they treated the poor.

- A young girl was caught giving bread to a poor man, which was against the law!
- They put honey all over her and placed her on a high wall.
- When the bees came and consumed her, she cried out, and God decided to destroy the evil city.

HOW CAN WE KEEP FROM BEING STUNG BY BEES?

- Avoid wearing perfume, using scented soap, or wearing bright-colored clothes when you're around bees.
- Don't threaten bees by swatting or throwing things at them.
- If you're caught near a swarm of bees, try to keep calm and walk away slowly.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A BEE STINGS SOMEONE?

- The bee leaves its stinger behind and then dies, so the stinger needs to be removed.
- Most people react with a small bump or red spot, with a little pain and itching for up to a few days.
- But some people have much more dangerous reactions, especially if were stung ten or more times before.
- If you're stung and your whole arm or leg begins to swell or break out in a rash, if you have trouble breathing, or if you begin to have swelling around your face, you should see a doctor immediately.

IN THE TIME OF THE BIBLE, THERE WAS A HEATHEN PROPHET—HE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN GOD—WHO WAS SENT FOR BY THE KING OF MOAV.

- The King—his name was Balak—was an enemy of Israel; and he wanted the prophet—his name was Balaam—to curse Israel.
- But God said to the prophet, "You shall not curse the people."
- Yet when the prophet said, "Let me bless them!" God said to him: "They have no need of your blessing, for they are all blessed."
- And the story goes on to say: "Neither your honey nor your sting." (Numbers Rabbah 20:10)
- What do you think that means? (God has blessed us—so we have no need of your blessing, the honey you offer, and no fear of your curse, the threat of your sting.)



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